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ABSTRACT

Examined are two dimensicns cf leadership style (task-orientation and person-orientation) as they alsc define teacher style, specifically, as a function cf ccntext (grade-level, teacher experience, and socio-pclitical differences). The Teacher Opinion Questionnaire was utilized to obtain opinions of ideal teacher behavior. Subjects were teachers--544 frcm Pennsylvania and 732 from Sweden. They were evenly distributed among three grade levels, and levels of experience. Findings indicate two cossen ccmpcnents in the responses of the twc grcups--initiating structure and consideration. Americans were high in the former, and Swedes in the latter areas. Americans see a rigidity aspect to their jot, and Swedes do not. Americans also see a difference betweer instructional tasks and maintaining an authority position. The dominant value structure of the culture is reflected in teacher cpinicns about ideal behavior. (Author/JLL)

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Teacher Style: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Abstract

Teacher styles are affected by teaching environment. Swedish and American teachers provided opinions of "ideal teacher behavior." There were two common components in the responses of the two groups - initiating structure and consideration. Americans emphasized initiating structure; Swedish teachers emphasized consideration. Ideological differences in the two systems are discussed.

Teacher Style: A Cross-Cultural Study

The research on teacher behavior and teacher effectiveness has been bountiful, but inconclusive. From 10,000 published studies, during 65 years, no models emerged which reliably linked specific teacher-characteristics to educational outcomes. The Leadership Opinion Questionnaire was developed in industrial settings to identify and measure two dimensions of leadership style: task-orientation and person-orientation. These two dimensions are independent factors called Initiating Structure and Considerations. Our interest was whether or not these same dimensions define teacher style as well as leadership style, and if the weight given these two dimensions varies as a function of context, specifically, grade-level, teacher experience, and socio-political differences.

We thought the connection was worth exploring for several reasons. First, leadership style has been shown to be related to outcomes in the industrial setting such as employee satisfaction and productivity, and is related theoretically to Fiedler's Contingency model which links context variables to supervisor characterstics to various outcomes. A similar model for the educational setting would be a useful contribution to educational research. Second, the person - and task - orientation dimensions have been shown empirically to underlie more than 100 teacher observation instruments, and noted students of classroom phenomena often refer to the leadership qualities of the teacher, indicating that a leadership model may be a useful heuristic device.

The Leadership Opinion Questionnaire was modified by substituting classroom - relevant terms in the items (e.g., "class" for "work group" and "student" for "worker"). This instrument, called the Teacher Opinion Questionnaire contained 40 behavioral statements (e.g.,"Put the welfare of the class above the

welfare of any student in it"). The teacher is asked to indicate on a scale of 1-5 (always - seldom) how often an ideal teacher should behave in the manner described.

Two stratified samples of teachers were identified from the membership list of the Pennsylvania State Education Association and the roster of all active teachers in Sweden. Five hundred teachers in grades 1-3, in grades 4-6, and in grades 7-12 (grade 10 in Sweden) received the questionnaire. Completed forms were returned to us by 544 Pennsylvanians and 732 Swedes. Return was evenly distributed among the three grade levels in both cases. Teachers were asked to indicate the number of years of service, so the samples could be further classified as having worked 1-5 years, 6-10 years, or 11+ years. Nine cells resulted for each of the 2 samples, 3 levels of grade crossed with 3 levels of experience.

Principle Components Analyses were undertaken separately for each of the 3 grade levels and for each experience level on response to the 29 items which had sufficient variance. For the American data, 3 components emerged (present in all 6 analyses). Loading pattern suggested that they should be labeled Consideration, Initiating Structure and Rigidity Flexibility.

Coefficients of Congruence indicated similarity of factor structure, allowing a single analysis on pooled data from which factor scores were generated. Analyses of variance tested the effects of grade and experience on the factor scores. Significantly higher Consideration factor-scores occurred in grades K-3 than in other levels and also with teachers having 1-5 years of experience. Teachers in grades 7-12 had higher Rigidity scores but these scores were not affected by experience. There were no differential effects on Initiating Structure factor scores. Similar analyses for the Swedish data yielded 2, rather than 3 factors, Initiating Structure and Considerations, which were common across 6 analyses. Effects were found

Considerations, which were common across 6 analyses. Effects were found for grade level on both Consideration and Initiating Structure: teachers in the upper grades had higher scores than teachers in the low and middle grades. Initiating Structure scores decreased as experience increased. Keeping in mind the polarity of the items, it should be noted that increase in scores actually means that the behavior is less important to the teacher.

Table 1 shows the original 40 items comprising the TOQ. The first column to the right indicates the factor which a given item defines. You will see items defining the Rigidity factor, found in the American data, designated with an R in parentheses. Items which did not vary, and were later dropped from analyses are so marked. The second column shows the mean differences for American and Swedish data. A indicates a significant difference favoring American teachers. S indicates that the item favors Swedish teachers. Of the 16 items defining the Initiating Structure factor, 9 indicated significantly greater importance to American teachers. Eight of 13 Consideration items were significantly more important to Swedish teachers. This means, in effect, that Swedish teachers value Initiating Structure less, and Consideration, more than their American counterparts.

This is an accurate reflection of the value structures of the two societies. The United States has traditionally subscribed to the Protestant Ethic as a model for living, and this value system is communicated in the classroom. For example, it is generally considered important to receive grades as a measure of goal achievement, and there is great emphasis in classroom motivation and test score results as well as repeated reference to the highly-paid jobs which wait for the student who works hard, and excels. The individual is assessed with reference to those around him. Comparison is inevitable.

Motivation to achieve is not part of the Swedish value system. Such an ethic would run counter to the Social-Democratic political philosophy which says that the individual has a right to a stress-free life during which his basic needs are guaranteed to be met by the state. The emphasis on individual equality is keenly felt in all aspects of the culture and it is considered anti-social to aspire to own more than ones neighbor or to ask children to excel above fellow classmates. Great care is taken to be sure that the child is not unhappy in any situation. Students receive no grades or reports on accomplishments until age 12. Tests are not administered. Homework is never given. The child is encouraged to learn as much as he wants to. Taxation rates level the economic status of individuals, so high earnings are punished, in effect.

These results are encouraging for use of leadership models in educational settings for several reasons. It verifies the findings of Dunkin and Biddle, Rosenshine and Furst, and Emmer and Peek, that these are at least 2 independent dimensions of teacher-interaction-style found by factoring observational measures which can also be identified using a self-report measure. The weight given these two dimensions varies as a function of the context in which the teacher works; that is the grade-level and years of experience both affect the perceived desirability of certain behaviors. In addition, American teachers see a third dimension to their job (Rigidity) which Swedish teachers do not see. Examination of the items on this factor indicate that the United States teachers sees a difference between organizing instructional tasks and maintaining an authority position. All items on the latter factor involve response to suggestions for change. The teachers indicate that they think it's important (especially the young teacher in the lower grades) to pick a path and stay with it. In addition, this instrument shows

sensitivity to cultural differences and indicates that the dominant value structure is reflected in teacher opinions about ideal behavior.

TEACHER STYLE: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY
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Teacher Opinion Questionnaire Items

Raw score range: 1-5; 1 = "Always"; 5 = "Seldom" Higher scores = Less Desirability	Factor: C=Consideration S=Structure	$\bar{X}$=Difference A=Important to American teach. S=Important to Swedish teach $p < .05$
1. Put the welfare of your class above the welfare of any student in it.	C	S
2. Give in to your students in discussions with them.	C	S
3. Encourage after-school work by your students.	*	S
4. Try out your own new ideas in your class.	C	A
5. Back up what your students do.	C	S
6. Criticize poor work.	S	(NS)
7. Ask for more than students can accomplish.	*	A
8. Refuse to compromise a point.	S(R)**	S
9. Insist that your students follow closely those standard routines handed down to you.	S	S
10. Help your students with their personal problems.	C	S
11. Be slow to adopt new ideas.	S(R)	S
12. Get the approval of your students on important matters	C	S
13. Resist changes in ways of doing things.	S(R)	(NS)
14. Assign your students to particular tasks.	S	A
15. Speak in a manner not to be questioned.	*	A

16.	Stress the importance of being ahead of other classes.	*	A
17.	Criticize a specific act rather than a particular student in your class.	*	S
18.	Let your students do their work the way they think is best.	-S	S
19.	Do personal favors for your students.	C	(NS)
20.	Emphasize the meeting of deadlines.	S	A
21.	Insist that you be informed of work-related decisions made by your students.	C	(NS)
22.	Offer new approaches to problems.	C	A
23.	Treat all your students as your equals.	C	S
24.	Be willing to make changes.	C(R)	(NS)
25.	Talk about how much should be done.	*	A
26.	Wait for your students to push new ideas.	*	S
27.	Rule with an iron hand.	S	A
28.	Reject suggestions for change.	S(R)	A
29.	Change the responsibilities of the students without first talking it over with them.	S	A
30.	Decide in detail what should be done and how it should be done by your students.	S	S
31.	See to it that your students are working up to capacity.	S	A
32.	Stand up for your students even though it makes you unpopular with others.	C	S
33.	Put suggestions made by your students into operation.	C	S
34.	Refuse to explain your actions to the students.	*	A
35.	Ask for sacrifices from your students for the good of the class.	*	(NS)
36.	Act without consulting your students.	S	A
37.	"Needle" your students for greater effort.	S	A
38.	Insist that everything be done your way.	S	A

39. Encourage slow-working students in your class to work harder.	S	A
40. Meet with your students at regularly scheduled times	*	A

* No item variance: dropped from Principal Components Analyses

** Loaded in third factor appearing in American data: Rigidity-Flexibility.

Footnotes

1. Paper was presented at the Mid-Western Psychological Association 50th Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois; May 4-6, 1978.